Disaster preparedness is especially important for people with disabilities. Read the blog all this week for tips. The “Great Utah Shake-Out” Earthquake drill is scheduled for Wednesday, April 17 at 10:15 a.m. Will you be ready? The following information, compiled by the Earthquake Country Alliance, can help people with disabilities create their own personal preparedness plan. For more detailed information, visit www.earthquakecountry.org/roots. (Did you miss steps 1-3? See Monday’s blog here.)

STEP 4 – Safeguard Your Finances, by strengthening your property and considering insurance.

STEP 5 – Drop, Cover, and Hold On when the ground shakes

Protect yourself in the safest place possible without having to move far—no matter your limitations, you need to protect yourself as best as possible. The more limitations you have, the more important it is to create safe spaces for yourself. Do NOT try to get out of the building during an earthquake! Most people are injured by other people or falling debris as they try to exit buildings during the shaking. Drop under a piece of furniture or against an inside wall. Take Cover under a desk or table if possible, and protect your head and neck with one arm/hand. Hold on to a desk or furniture leg to keep it from shifting or uncovering you until the shaking completely stops. Practice these activities frequently!

Suggestions for people who find it difficult to Drop, Cover, and Hold On: If you are in a wheelchair, recliner or bed, do not try to transfer to or from your chair during the shaking. Wait until the shaking stops to transfer. Stay put. Cover your head and neck with your arms or a pillow until the shaking stops. Wheelchair users: Lock your wheels; cover your head and neck until after the shaking stops. The force of the earthquake may knock you off your feet or throw you to the ground. If you have mobility or balance issues, the shaking may make it even harder for you to move around. If you have difficulty getting back up after dropping under a desk or table, consider other ways to protect yourself. Be sure you have someone check on you in case you need assistance. If it helps – count out loud until the shaking stops. It may help keep you calm. Hearing your voice can reassure others you are okay. If you have practiced counting out loud during your drills, it can serve as a reminder for others to keep calm and remember what to do.

STEP 6 – Improve Safety

Once the shaking stops: Check yourself for injury and pay extra attention to any areas where you may have reduced sensations. Be prepared for aftershocks. Stay close to and aware of the safe spaces in your environment. Look around for hazards (broken glass, objects in your way, etc.) Furniture may have shifted and sound cues may not be available. Evacuate only if necessary, otherwise stay where you are and shelter in place. If the authorities advise an evacuation for your area, follow their directions immediately. Do not expect that they will be able to return to assist you.

STEP 7 – Restore Daily Life

Follow your disaster plan. Contact your out-of-area contact, tell them your status, then stay off the phone. Text messaging may be more reliable than phone. Expect aftershocks, remain aware of your surroundings as the aftershocks may change conditions or create new hazards. Always be ready to protect yourself. Repair or replace damaged items as needed. After any disaster, review and revise your disaster plan. Apply any lessons learned.

What if you have refrigerated medications? Keep your medications in the refrigerator until it begins to get warm, and then move it to the freezer until it is warm. Next transfer medication to as small an insulated container as possible. Use chemical cold packs to keep your medications cool. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if your medications can be unrefrigerated, and if so, for how long. If you evacuate to a shelter, tell shelter staff that you have refrigerated medications.